



## **Homeless Families and Trauma – Basic Facts**

Even a brief look into the background of homeless families reveals that they often experience high levels of traumatic stress. The statistics below describe the context of homeless families as well as some information about the types of trauma to which they have been exposed.

### **HOMELESS MOTHERS**

- 92% have experienced severe physical or sexual assault in their lifetime.<sup>1</sup>
- 44% lived outside their homes at some point during their childhood. Of these women, 20% were placed in foster care.<sup>2</sup>
- 36% have experienced Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, a rate three times higher than other women.<sup>3</sup>
- Homeless mothers have ulcers at four times the rate of other women.<sup>4</sup>

### **FAMILY VIOLENCE**

- Almost 25% of homeless children have witnessed acts of violence within their family.<sup>5</sup>
- 62% of formerly homeless, extremely low-income children (ages 8 to 17 years old) have been exposed to violence. For children over 12, the rate of exposure to violence climbs to 83%.<sup>6</sup>
- 63% of homeless mothers have been violently abused by an intimate male partner.
- 27% of homeless mothers have required medical treatment because of violence by an intimate male partner.<sup>7</sup>
- 66% of homeless women were violently abused by a childhood caretaker or other adult in their household before reaching age 18.
- 43% of homeless women were sexually molested as children.<sup>8</sup>

### **HOMELESS CHILDREN**

- 34% of school-aged children who have been homeless have lived apart from their families<sup>9</sup>
- Homeless children suffer from emotional or behavioral problems that interfere with learning at almost three times the rate of other children.<sup>10</sup>
- Homeless children between 6 and 17 years old struggle with high rates of mental health problems. For example, 47% have problems such as anxiety, depression, or withdrawal, compared to 18% of other school-age children.<sup>11</sup>

To learn more about homeless families, visit [www.FamilyHomelessness.org](http://www.FamilyHomelessness.org).

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<sup>1</sup> Bassuk, E.L., Weinreb, L., Buckner, J. , et al. (1996). The characteristics and needs of sheltered homeless and low-income housed mothers. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 276(8): 640-646.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Bassuk, E.L., Buckner, J.C., Perloff, J.N., and Bassuk, S.S., “Prevalence of mental health and substance abuse disorders among homeless and low-income housed mothers,” *The American Journal of Psychiatry*. 155(11) (1998): 1561-1564.

<sup>4</sup> National Center on Family Homelessness, *Homeless Children: America's New Outcasts*, 1999, p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p.10.

<sup>6</sup> Buckner, J., William R. Beardslee and Ellen L. Bassuk. (2004). Exposure to violence and low-income children's mental health: Direct, moderated, and mediated relations. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*. 74(4): 2004.

<sup>7</sup> National Center on Family Homelessness, p.18.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p.19.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.12.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p.23.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p.13.